

Sunday School Session

BY BEN NEWSOME

Lesson July 25, II Samuel 21:1-7; 5:1-5.

The same honesty of purpose and generosity to those who opposed him that impelled David to spare the life of Saul when it was evident that the Lord had thrown his enemy into his power, again showed itself in his treatment of the men who remained loyal to the house of the slain king as well as in his prompt execution of justice upon those who had thought to please him by murdering the lone heir to Saul's throne. It may be said that there was good politics in his conduct. Doubtless there was, for the people in time will respond to integrity of mind and heart, even though in the light of prevailing opinion such conduct was foolish and unconventional. The only good kind of politics is that which is based upon conviction of right and justice, rather than upon a hankering after popularity. The man who seeks to follow public opinion may flourish for a while, but in the long run the people will turn with confidence and trust to the man who, in spite of adverse public opinion, stands steadfast for what he is convinced is right.

Those who told David of the burial of Saul doubtless expected the new king would seek to wreak revenge upon the partisans of the king who had for years made him a refugee in a foreign land. The usual course of a new monarch was to slay all who could possibly be suspected of leaning toward his enemies or plotting against his throne. David rather sought to win the friendship of the opposition, commending them for their loyalty to the crown and respect for the dead, charging them to be strong and valiant for the new regime as they had been for the old. Nothing disarms vindictive opposition like being credited with good motives and taking it for granted that they will follow a righteous course. By his kindness to the men of Jabesh-Gilead David cemented to his reign the loyalty of the people in that section and made treason unpopular.

Likewise, on the other hand, he put a stop at once to crimes committed in his favor by hanging the men who assassinated the heir to Saul's throne. They were cowards, but they planned to ingratiate themselves in favor with the new government by removing a claimant to David's throne. But David's sense of right was supreme to his selfish instincts. The fact that a hideous crime had been committed in his

favor did not deter him from prompt execution of the penalty for murder. He wanted to get and hold his throne by divine favor, not by the methods of the devil. His views in this case were inexplicable to many at the time, but in the long run they redounded to his benefit as thoughtful men began to realize that here was a man to whom principle was greater than expediency. The men who slew Ishbosheth committed a political crime, but they expected to be rewarded. Their fate was notice carved on others that crime would not be tolerated because it was done with a praiseworthy end in view. David had no patience with the idea of doing evil that good might come.

David won a crown and a kingdom without ever doing a dishonest or unkind thing to get it for himself, nor would he tolerate or endorse the doing of wrong for his interest. True success is not won by grabbing for it, but comes as the natural result of deserving it. The real human reason why David was voluntarily accepted by the people as king was that they liked him.

He was unselfish, generous, conscientious, risked his life with his men, and never took an unfair advantage of others. He was just and square with friend and foe alike. So the kingdom came to him because God meant that it should. Courage and unselfishness make a combination that will tell in the affairs of the world, and will ultimately succeed far better than the efforts of unscrupulous selfishness.

Success is usually regarded in the light of acquiring wealth or a great name, but it takes the sifting process of time to find out who have really succeeded in the permanent meaning of the term. Temporary triumph may mean much or little. Too many men achieve what they call success by methods which in themselves hold the germs of failure. They flash across the firmament for a space of time and then fade away, and few people miss them or mourn their absence. Others labor and suffer for years to reach an ideal and depart leaving an actual impress for good upon their fellow beings. Which are really successful? Time is required to realize a just estimate of a man's standing. People may be dazzled by a spurious article, but in the years to come dispassionate second thought will give a juster verdict. There can be no really successful life that is not inspired by high aims and purity of character. No man is prosperous

who has a starved moral nature, no matter how well filled may be his purse or how wide his circle of influence.

The person who knows how to conduct himself in a brotherly way toward those who have mistreated him, whether he rises to high position in the world's affairs or not, will win real success as a real leader of men. David was never slow to seize opportunities but he ascribed all to the wish and the guidance of Jehovah. Whether he considered it in the light of obedience to God, service to his fellow men, or satisfaction to himself, he thanked God that he was where he was and what he

was. When the going was good he rejoined and thanked God; when it was bad, he steadfastly clung to his faith and refused to lose courage. He was in love with his job—a condition that is absolutely essential to success in any walk of life.

In the regular ministry, as well as in every branch of home mission work, there is a demand for men who will give themselves with determination to the task. There are the entrenched powers of organized vice to attack. There are great groups of the untutored and misled from overseas to be Americanized on the broad pattern of a vigorous Christianity. There are great areas

responding rapidly to the impulse of modern social and industrial development. Populations flooded them almost overnight. Industries sprung into being. With the outlining of social and political life under the powerful stimulus of modern thought, it is imperative that Christianity should not be an afterthought, but carefully wrought into the ground plans of the new order. The best recipe to overcome the evils of an over-materialistic age is to build on that foundation that has divinity in human affairs as its cornerstone. "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart and lean not upon thine own understanding."

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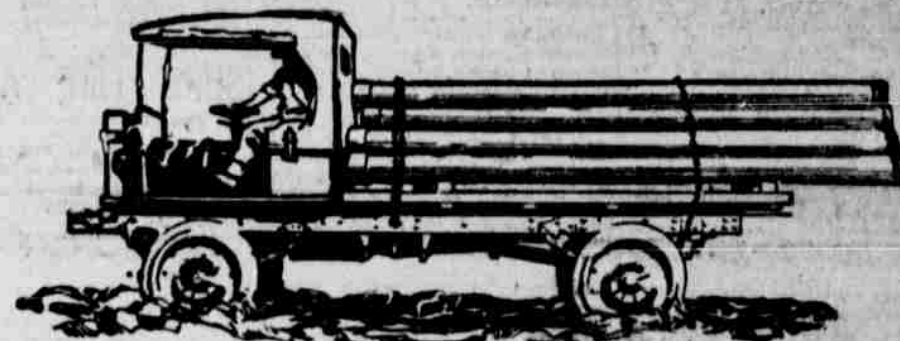
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